



## Two bitter apricot kernels per day are the limit for adults - children should refrain from consuming apricot kernels altogether

Updated BfR opinion No. 009/2015, 7 April 2015

Bitter apricot kernels have increasingly been offered for direct consumption for some time now, especially through Internet channels. In some cases, advertisements claim that apricot kernels offer protection against cancer. However, there is no scientific evidence of any such benefits. In fact, consumption of bitter apricot kernels can lead to severe poisoning which can be fatal if larger quantities are ingested. The toxic effect of bitter apricot kernels is due to the food ingredient amygdalin. From amygdalin, cyanide is released during ingestion and digestion. The body can break down small amounts of cyanide through metabolic processes. For adults, a quantity of two large bitter apricot kernels can be regarded as safe in terms of acute poisoning symptoms. The Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR) therefore recommends that consumers limit their intake of bitter apricot kernels to no more than two a day or that no apricot kernels are eaten at all. In the opinion of the BfR, packaging of bitter apricot kernels intended for direct consumption should carry warnings of potential health risks and state the recommended maximum daily intake. To protect children against ingestion of large quantities of bitter apricot kernels, they should only be offered in small packs.

		BfR Risk Profile: Bitter Apricot Kernels (Opinion No. 009/2015)			
<b>A</b> Affected persons	Adults and children				
<b>B</b> Probability of health impairment following consumption of large quantities	Practically impossible	Improbable	Possible	Probable	Certain
<b>C</b> Severity of health impairment following consumption of large quantities	No impairment	Slight impairment [reversible/irreversible]	Moderate impairment [reversible/irreversible]	Severe impairment reversible/irreversible	
<b>D</b> Validity of available data	High: Essential data are available and free of contradictions		Medium: Some essential data are missing or contradictory	Low: Large amounts of essential data missing or contradictory	
<b>E</b> Controllability by the consumer	Control not necessary	Controllable through precautionary measures	Controllable through avoidance	Not controllable	

Dark blue shaded fields designate the characteristics of the risk assessed in this opinion (more detailed information on this can be found in the text of BfR Opinion No. 009/2015, 7 April 2015).

### Explanations

The purpose of the risk profile is to visualise the risk described in the BfR opinion. It is not intended for risk comparisons. The risk profile should only be read in the context of the opinion.

#### Row B – Probability of health impairment

Human data on cases of severe poisoning following consumption of large quantities of bitter apricot kernels is available.

#### Row C – Severity of health impairment

[1] If large quantities of bitter apricot kernels are ingested, severe poisoning that may be fatal is possible.

#### Row E – Controllability by consumers

[1] Adults should eat no more than two bitter apricot kernels per day.

[2] Children should refrain from consuming apricot kernels altogether.

The full version of this BfR opinion is available in German on  
<http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/343/zwei-bittere-aprikosenkerne-pro-tag-sind-fuer-erwachsene-das-limit-kinder-sollten-darauf-verzichten.pdf>